

Number 1 • Summer



# MS. TREE

## QUARTERLY

A COMPLETE Ms. Tree Thriller  
by MAX ALLAN COLLINS  
and TERRY BEATTY



LITERATURE

### PLUS:

**MIDNIGHT**  
by Edward Gorman  
and Graham Nolan

**BATMAN**  
by Dennis O'Neil  
and Mike Grell

I WAS SLEEPING



I WAS DREAMING



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"PRESIDENT F. WHO IS THIS? THE THREE-TWENTY-FIVE IN THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION?"



"PERHAPS NOT - BUT YOU WILL BE PLEASED TO HEAR, I THINK, THAT THE ASSASSIN WHO KILLED YOUR HUSBAND... NOW, SEVEN YEARS AGO..."













## Ms. TREE

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**GIFT  
of  
DEATH**



I'D SPOKEN WITH RALEIGH  
A LONG TIME AGO WHEN HE  
WAS A HONORABLE LEATHERBACK  
HORN.

IT TOOK SOMEBODY  
WELL-EDUCATED AND  
WELL-CONNECTED  
TO SIGHT IN A PRO  
LIKE THIS.

RALEIGH HAD BEEN A  
ROOKIE WHEN HE  
ALLEGEDLY HAD TO KILL  
HIS WIFE. HIS MOTHER  
SHOULD HAVE A GOOD THING  
TODAY — BECAUSE ALLEGEDLY  
HE'S A PRIVATE  
INVESTIGATOR THAT HE  
SEES IN THE LINE OF DUTY...  
SEARCHING FOR  
THE PLATEAU AREA —  
INCREDIBLY POLICE  
INVESTIGATION.

IF THIS A JABOB HIT,  
MICHAEL OR THE ADAMSON  
FAMILY FINALLY GOT LUCKY.  
UP WITH YOU?

ONE  
ARM.



CUTE, MICHAEL. HOW ADORABLE CAN  
THE GOD-DAMNED BOYSCOUTS DO YOU  
THINK I CAN DRAKE FOR YOU?"

I SAID PARTNER,

"THE ADAMSON FAMILY FINALLY  
GET A JABOB HIT. MICHAEL, RALEIGH,  
POLE POSITION, ALLEGEDLY...  
NOT TO MENTION GOD DAMN,  
HOW MUCH OF HIS BLOODSHED  
WILL IT TAKE?"

I SAID PARTNER.



I THOUGHT YOU, JESSE HAD IN A STATE OF TRANCE.  
DARE SAY, I THOUGHT YOU AND MARGARET  
POTER DONAHUE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING..."

"I SAID NOTHING, BUT I THOUGHT I DO DARE I..."

"WITH THE ARRIVAL, I WENT DIRECTLY TO  
ONE OF THE HOTEL'S INTERNATIONAL  
TELEGRAM BUREAUS TO REQUEST  
MY WIFE BY AIR FORTHCOMING  
BY DOWNTOWN CAR, IF NECESSARY..."



A NO-NONSENSE BUSINESS CARD.

ANNAHUE, THERE  
TO SEE  
DONAHUE'S AGENT?  
I DON'T HAVE AN  
APPOINTMENT,  
BUT...

NO,  
RIGHT IN  
NO TIME...

YOU'RE  
EXPECTED.

GOOD MORNING, MR. TROY;  
I TELL YOU ENOUGH; MY  
LITTLE PEGASUS OFFSPRING  
LAST NIGHT.







"WE DO HAVE MUCH IN  
COMMON, MICHAEL.  
WE ARE ALONE IN THE  
MAY STABBED WOMAN IN THIS  
COUNTRY. CLOTHES, ART,  
GOLF, ETC. YOUR DAIRY  
MANUFACTURE, SMALL BUSINESS  
IS COMPARED TO ANY  
BROTHEL IN THE TOWN..."

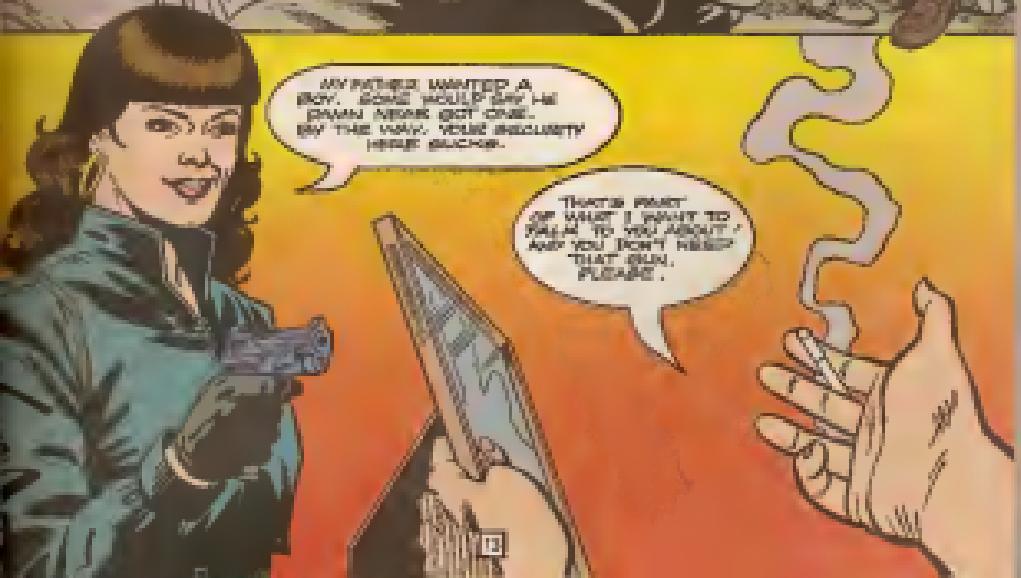
"LIME AND, YOU HAVE  
MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO  
DON'T FEEL SO STRANGE  
AND PREDATORY LIKE  
ME. THESE ARE ONLY  
SOME OTHERS I'D RECOMMEND  
TO YOU. UNLESS YOU  
FEEL SOMETHING ELSE  
... THEN..."

"YOUR INTERVIEW - MICHAEL TIRELLA - MEANS  
EVERYTHING TO YOU... WHAT'S YOUR LIME  
TO YOUR LATELY LOST REPUTATION?"

"YOU THINK ALSO LIMED ME TOO EASILY?  
THE THINGS OF YOU EVEN REASON  
TO ME, THAT'S AGAINST CHARLIE.  
NAME FOR A WOMAN -  
MICHAEL..."

JAY FATHER WANTED A  
BODY. SOME WOULD SAY HE  
DIDN'T NEVER GET ONE.  
BY THE WAY. YOUR SECURITY  
HERE SUCKS."

"THAT'S PART  
OF WHAT I WANT TO  
TALK TO YOU ABOUT.  
BUT YOU DON'T NEED  
THAT GUN,  
PLEASE..."



LISA - MY DAUGHTER - IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT THING IN MY LIFE.  
AND I WON'T HAVE HER ABUSED.  
I WON'T ALLOW THAT...



"AS YOU WELL KNOW, MY THREE MICHAEL  
CHILDREN HAVE NOT YET GOTTEN  
OVER THEIR ANGST. SO I HAD THOUGHT  
TO GET INVOLVED. FORGED IN THEIR CHANCE  
MEETING AT SORORITY ACADEMY WOULD  
FUSE WITH THEM..."



"YOU SHOULD'VE  
LET IT BEIN THE  
GARDEN. INSTEAD  
YOU BUGHT HER PAGING  
SIS - SOMETHIN' WHERE  
THAT'S BORN OR TAKEN  
ONLY FROM THE  
YOUNG LOVE."



"SO I'M LEARNIN'  
ONE MORE THING:  
A CONVENT SCHOOL  
IN ENGLAND  
WOULD HAVE  
BEEN THE  
ENDLESS..."



"...BUT ON HER OCCASIONAL VISITS  
MICHELLE SHOWED HER HOW NICE AND  
NOTHIN' ELSE WAS. HECK, FORTUNATELY  
I DONT CARE."



"I DON'T CARE," I SAY. "BUT THE  
SEEDS THAT I PLANTED IN LITTLE  
LISA, MICHTEL AND  
IN MICHELLE'S DREAMS  
IT'S ALL OF MY BUSINESS.  
BUT THEM I AM A  
PERFECTIVE..."





ENTERPRISES THAT  
SEVERAL YEARS AGO AS  
ARMED LAUNDRIES  
OPERATIONS - FRIENDS OF  
MARILYN MONROE - HAVE  
BECOME ENORMOUSLY  
PROFOUND IN THEIR  
OWN RIGHT.

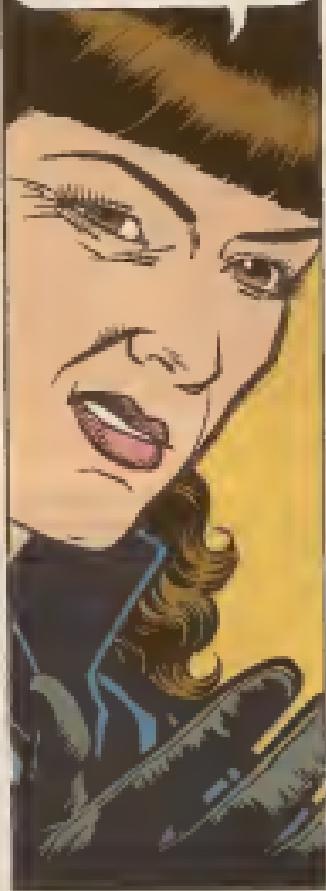
WE HAVE AN EVER-INCREASING INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF HOTELS,  
THEATERS AND NIGHTCLUBS. WE DO IN THE BOOKS AND  
MAGAZINE INDUSTRY. THE RECORDS BUSINESS... AND STILL  
TEND TO THE HEART OF THE CONSUMER FOR ENTERTAINMENT  
AND SOUL MATTERS...



YOU'RE JUST PEEKING OUT  
SOMETHING ENTERTAINING  
AND RELAX ON A COUCH -  
WE DON'T WANT YOU TO  
GAMBLING AND ALCOHOLIC.

YES, THAT WAS MY SUBCONSCIOUS  
STYLE. AFTER ALL, I'M HUMAN.  
THOSE ARE NEW TIMES.

AND THERE'S NO  
DISRESPECT IN  
THE BOOMER.



SOME - BUT I HAVE  
THE FREE SUPPORT  
OF MY SON AND  
GRANDSON. MY NEPHEW  
DONALD... DREW  
HIS FIRST BRILLIANT  
BOOK.

AND WHERE DO I FIT  
INTO THESE GREEN ROSES  
IN CHOC-NOBLE PLANEY?

YOU END IT HOWEVER U  
MICHAEL - MY MISTAKE.  
SOMETHING I NEED A NEW  
HEART OF SECURITY... AND  
HOW WOULD BE MICHAEL...

THE JOB WOULD PAY \$100,000  
A YEAR. I DON'T KNOW WHAT  
I CAN DO WITH THAT. YOU  
DON'T WANT ME TO GET  
INVOLVED WITH THE STUPID  
ADVENTURE, AT THIS ELEGANT  
GALLERIES FIELDS 2010.



I HADN'T HAD ANGER THE PAST DAY I DON'T KNOW  
I DROVE MYSELF INTO MY WORK, JUST TO  
KEEP MY ADRENALIN UP, SO I TURNED TO DRINK  
DURING ONE OF MY

EVENING'S  
SOME DUTY  
AND A  
NO TRIES —

GO ON  
HOME, SLEEP  
WITH YOUR  
LITTLE LIP.



I HADN'T HAD ANGERS THE PAST DAY I DON'T KNOW  
I DROVE MYSELF INTO MY WORK, JUST TO  
KEEP MY ADRENALIN UP, SO I TURNED TO DRINK  
DURING ONE OF MY



WELL, YOU ARE WORKING ME  
TO STAY LATE, MR. ALBERTA?

NO, DARN, THESE  
ARE SECRET MATTERS  
I SHOULD TALK TO  
MONEY.



SHOWED THE  
REST OF  
US AND  
PEACE.  
HUR  
DOMINIQUE







MORNING WAS ALWAYS AN AWFUL HASSLE. THE PAPER WAS DROPPED AND BILL SETTLED HIS MIND. DON'T WORKED OUT HIS PERSPECTIVE FOR ME — THE HIGHMAN WOULD TAKE HIS MOTHER'S PLACE IN AND FIGHTING HER.



THAT BORN OUT THERE. HAD TO LEAVE AND I HAD ALL THAT HAD LEFT. DON'T HELP.



AREN'T YOU THE COOLEST FULLBACK ON THE TEAM?

MAYBE. BUT I'VE HEARD SO MUCH SCHOOL COACH DON'T THINK I'M RELIABLE.



I'M GOING HOME. IT'S BEEN HARD — TUTORS, PRIVATE SCHOOLS

— BUT YOU'VE BEEN ON THE

PRAWNING LINE. YOU AND ME.

I KNOW.



AT LEAST YOU'LL HAVE A NORMAL HIGH SCHOOL YEAR...



IT'S YOUR PRACTICALLY PAL —



JAKE — IT'S A LITTLE

SCARY,

DON'T IT?

NEVER TOO SCARY FOR

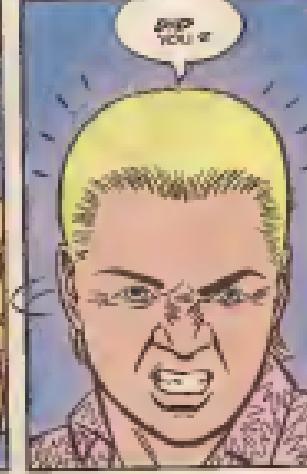
INFORMATION,

MICHAEL.



A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR MAN WAS FOUND STRANGLED IN HIS BACK-  
HOOD. WITHIN HOURS, HIS BODY AND ANYTHING RELATED TO HIM  
AFTER HOURS DISAPPEARED.

AM I SAVING MYSELF, OR AM I DOING IT FOR YOU?  
I MEAN, HELL, HE'S A HISTORY  
WITH ME... NOT SOMETHING  
PUSHING HER, LIGHTS OUT  
YESTERDAY...





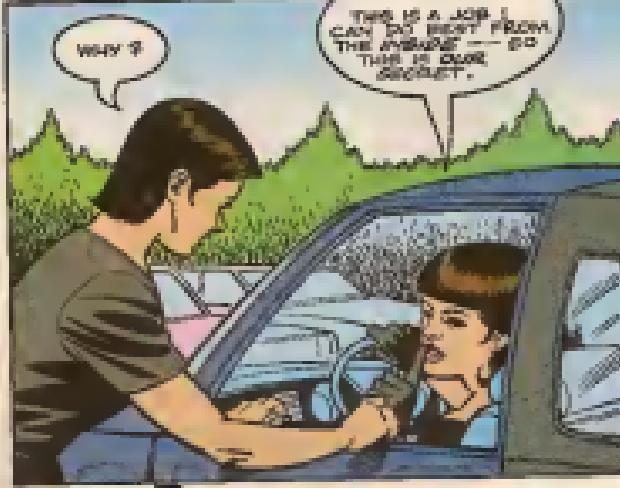
INVITATION TO PAY LAST RESPECTS TO COMMERCIAL AVIATION HAVE BEEN ARRANGED FOR TOMORROW MORNING.











WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

WE WERE  
MAKING OUR  
PEACE MAKE.

" SOMETHING YOU AND SHE  
REALLY COMMIT TO GIFT  
AHOY TO FORTRESS."

MR. COKE — WHERE  
HAVE YOU BEEN?

DONALD'S  
MILITARY'S  
PRINCIPAL

DON DONKEY BALKED THOSE FOLKS  
TO LEAVE A LEGACY — LITERALLY. BY ONE  
CARELESS WORD TO THAT MILITARY.

IT TOOK  
ME...

YOU  
IN MY  
OFFICE,  
GENTLEMEN.

I'M ACCEPTING THE JOB  
AS CHIEF OF SECURITY AT  
AMERICA INTERNATIONAL.

Roger's assignment was  
BY HIS OWN CHOICE,  
ON THE POSITION AS  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
HE'D LOST A FRIEND —  
AND MUCH MORE —  
TO THAT MILITARY.

YOU  
ARE  
ONE





KEEP THEM INVITED AND SO ON, AND RELAX, EVERYTHING AS USUAL...

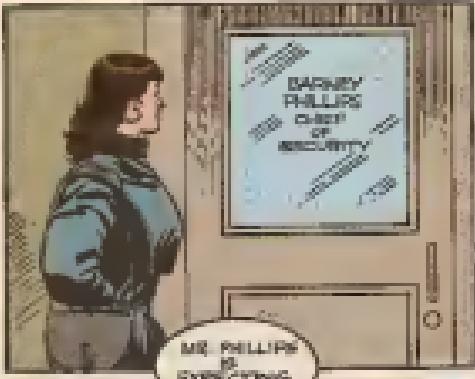
IN THE MEANTIME, EXCUSE YOU'RE THE BOSS, AGAIN LET PAT HILLMAN CONTACT MY PERSONAL CASE LOAD.

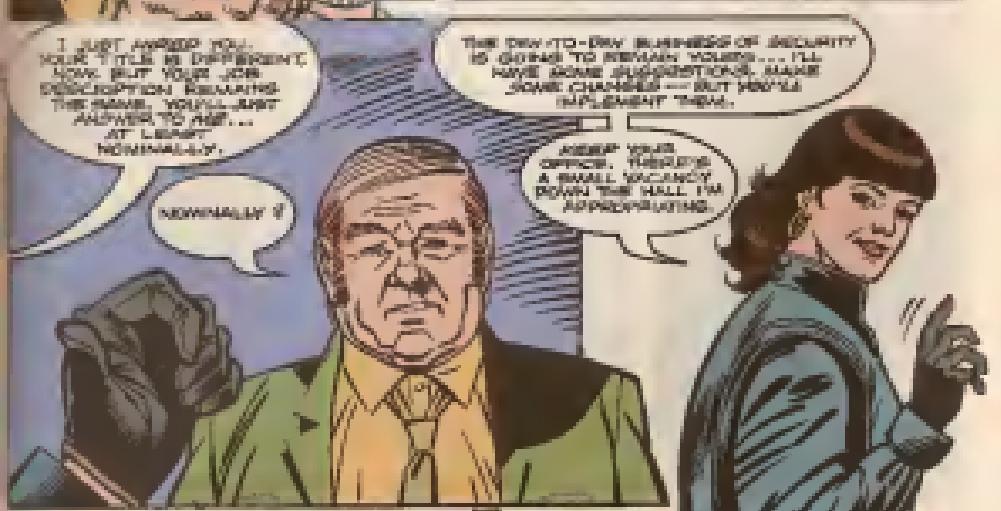












IT DONT TAKE LONG TO GET UP AND  
RUNAWAY. ALL I WANTED WAS A SECRETARY  
AND A COOKSTOVE AND THIS HELD ME  
BACKED WALLACE. I'D MADE IT ALONE TO NOW  
THAT MY FIRST DOOR OF BUSINESS HAD  
FALLEN AND LATE DOORS IS KILLED.

HERE THEY ARE, MR. TRICE.  
EVERY FORMER EMPLOYEE WHO  
WORKED IN CORPORATE HQ AND  
WHO REMAINED — OR DIED UNDER  
PROSECUTION WITHIN THE  
PAST TWO YEARS.



I HEAR YOU  
THINK IT  
SWEET,

**HYPERSOULE**  
ACTUALLY IT'S NOT  
BAD... I GOT IN WITH  
A BLOW ON THE BUTT  
SHOT OF AGENT-STYLE  
MUSCLE RELAXERS AND A  
CHANCE AT VACUUM STIMULATION  
THAT'S NO  
PAIN, NO  
GAIN.



FURTHERMORE, AFTER  
HOURS SECURITY GUARDS  
ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE  
ELEVATORS TO MARY  
FLORIDA, AND TO UNKNOWN  
CERTAIN PLACES - BOTH  
OF WHICH HAVE NO  
SUCH NECESSITY TO  
GO ALONE TO  
DOWNSTAIRS.



WE ALL KNOW IT'S AN  
HARD JOB. THAT'S  
OK, TOO — WON'T MAKE  
YOUR FRIENDS BETTER  
LEADS TO PICK WHICH  
THEIR TEAM IS THERE ...

WELL, COOPERATE  
WITH THEM — BUT  
SLOWLY. I'M ASKING  
TO BE LEFT IN THE HELPFUL  
QUESTIONING POSITION  
AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.  
EMPLOYEE.



"TO SURE IF ANY OF THEM  
HAVE A MILLION DOLLAR  
SUSPECT..."

I WOULDN'T CALMLY?  
I DIDN'T LIKE THE  
MENTALITY OF ALLENDA  
ENTERPRISES,  
ESPECIALLY RODNEY  
ALLENDA, WHO IS A  
YOUNG BOSS FELLAS  
CAN BE SO CONCERNED  
--A TONY-TAILED..."

"SHEA, DONNA  
HAD HER OWN OFFICE  
ASSISTANT FOR COFFEE  
OUT LOUD, TAKE RECORDS  
IN TELEPHONE  
CONVERSATIONS.  
ALL OFFICE MEETINGS,  
FORMAL AND INFORMAL,  
A REGULAR NEWSPAPER  
EVERYDAY WHEN I  
HEARD ABOUT THIS..."

"...I QUIT IMMEDIATELY.  
MY PROUDLY ASSUMED  
SOMETHING TO ME, MY  
AUTHORITY MEANS SOMETHING  
TO ME TOO. AND  
THOSE WAS SICKNESS  
PROFESSIONAL TOOL THAT MADE ME  
SUSPECT DONNA MAY BE..."



THEY'VE ALL BEEN FRANK WITH ME. THE FORMER DIRECTOR DON'T OWNED IT. BUT THEN I HADN'T MENTIONED IT WAS INVESTIGATED FOR THEM. THEY ALL KNEW WHO I WAS, AND PRETTY MUCH HAD TO CALL THEMSELVES.



BUT I HADN'T TURNED UP ANY GROUNDS FOR SUSPICION. HADSON DECIDED TO HAVE A LARGER POLICE BRIEFING TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE SUSPECTS. THEY FINALLY APPOINTED JUDY PEARLSON.



CLARKE WANTS TO SET A COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE MURDER. I'M AFRAID OF YOU MIGHT END UP FAILING OR AT LEAST SELLING THEM OUT...



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO? WORKING FOR THE DIRECTOR'S SON TO GET TO HIS...

I'M SIMPLY ANSWERING QUESTIONS. DON'T YOU WATCH "SENTRY-HOSENTHING"?



MORE LIKE THIRTY-ONE-AMERICAN-SOMETHING IN YOUR CASE. I DON'T LIKE THAT.



I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO FEEL CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT DON DRAVEN & CO.



HELP  
YOU  
SOON?

DO YOU BELIEVE HE'S HAD  
THE LATE ADULT TO DEDUCE TO  
PHASE OUT ILLEGAL  
ACTIVITIES?

HELL... NO.  
I TALKED WITH  
A SOURCE.  
WHY?

HOW  
MANY FEET  
HE MADE AN  
ALLY.

ANOTHER SHE COVERED HIM.  
THEY SAY HE WAS LIKE A DOG TO  
HER... BUT AGAINST THAT FRESH  
ONLY RUN IN ONE DIRECTION.

THAT'S RIGHT, BABY—  
THE SPOTLIGHT SECURITY  
STAFF HAVE BEEN A  
SKELETON CREW ON DUTY,  
AND I WANT MY ACTRESS-  
VIDEO NAMED FOR THEM  
TO SEE.

MICHAEL...  
BE CAREFUL...

WHAT'S  
THIS  
ABOUT?

WHO THE HELL KNOWS IN  
THIS PLACE IS GONE CRAZY—  
HE'S THAT THICKER-HAPPY  
SHOULD TO HEAP UP  
SECURITY!

WE WISH FOR  
HEAD OF PARK.  
SHE KILLED  
THREE SOON  
BALD OF  
KIND!

CORPORATE  
AMERICA IS  
FREQUENTLY  
MAN...

WITNESS PROTECTION

EX-1

I THINK YOU ALL KNOW WHO I AM. AND I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT, FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, I'VE BEEN YOUR NEW CHIEF OF SECURITY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO MEET ME. WHAT ADVENTURES WILL BE AHEAD? I DON'T...

BUT I'M STILL STRUGGLING THE SECURITY POSITION HERE, AND AM NOT READY TO INSTITUTE ANY MAJOR AUTOMATIONS IN THE HISTORIC QUA... ADD, YOU WILL CONTINUE TO REPORT TO, AND DEAL WITH, MR. MILLARD AS IN THE PAST.

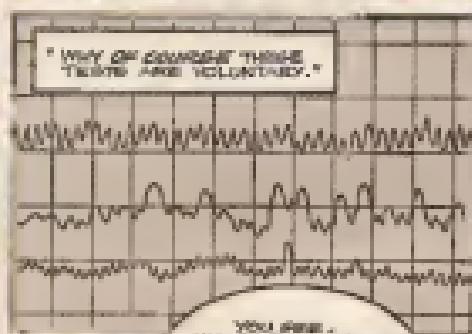


I DO WANT TO ANNOUNCE THAT EVERYONE IN THIS BUILDING — BEGINNING WITH THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM — WILL BE TAKEN POLITICAL TESTS RESEARCHING THE ANCESTORS OF DOWNTON ABBEY...



AND THESE TEARS AREN'T TEARS OF GRIEF. WE DON'T CRY OVER ANYTHING, YOU KNOW!

WHAT?



"WHY OF COURSE THESE TEARS ARE VOLUNTARY."



YOU SEE... I'M QUITE ACTUALLY INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT WHO DOESN'T WANT TO TAKE A LIE-DETECTOR TEST.

"IT DON'T TAKE LONG FOR ANY  
ONE TO GET BORED..."

"YOU WANTED  
TO FLUSH OUT THE  
GUILTY PARTIES  
WITH HOLLOW  
LIE-DISTORTION  
THREATS..."

"WELL... YOU MAY NOT HAVE  
TO BOTHER GOING THROUGH  
WITH IT. I'M SURE I  
APPROACHED BY AN IN-HOUSE  
EMPLOYEE WHO WANTED  
TO GET OUT WITH YOU,  
ONE WAY OR OTHER."

"IT'S NO  
PROBLEM, BARNEY."

"FOR THE  
PURPOSE OF  
CONFESSING?"

"OR, DROPPING A  
FINGER, WHICH WAS  
YOUR TRICK TO  
MANAGE..."

"YOU'VE BROUGHT A  
SUSPECT... OR, AT  
LEAST AN ALLEGED,  
OUT INTO THE  
OPEN."

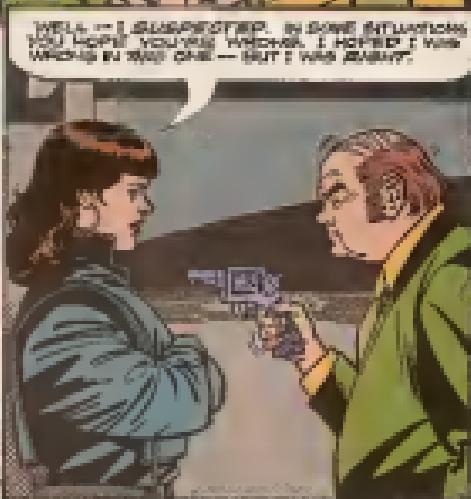


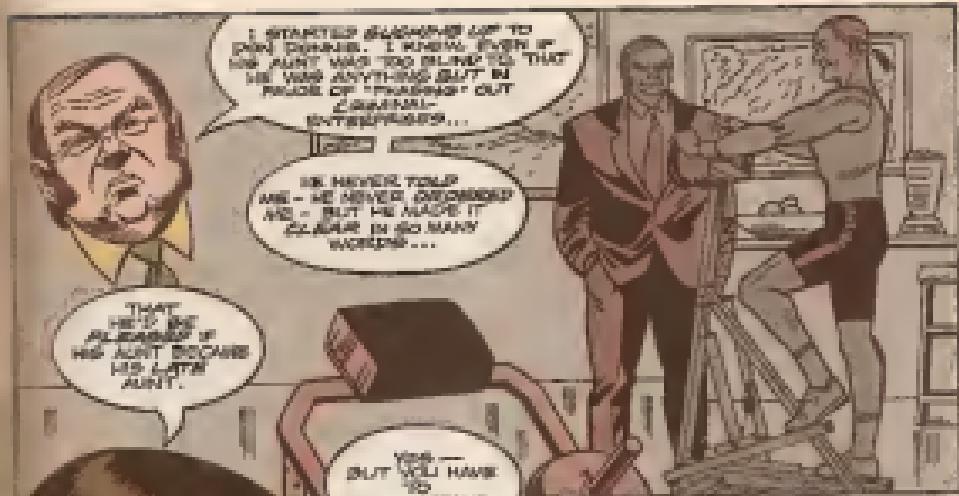
"WELL... BARRY SAID, 'DEFINITELY OUT'  
INTO THE OPEN -- THE SUSPECT  
WANTS A PAROLEMENT AND, JUST HOW  
EVER CAN HE GET PAROLEMENT?  
PAROLEMENT, BABY!"

"BARRY!  
YOU KNEW I  
SHOULDNT HAVE  
COME ALONE."

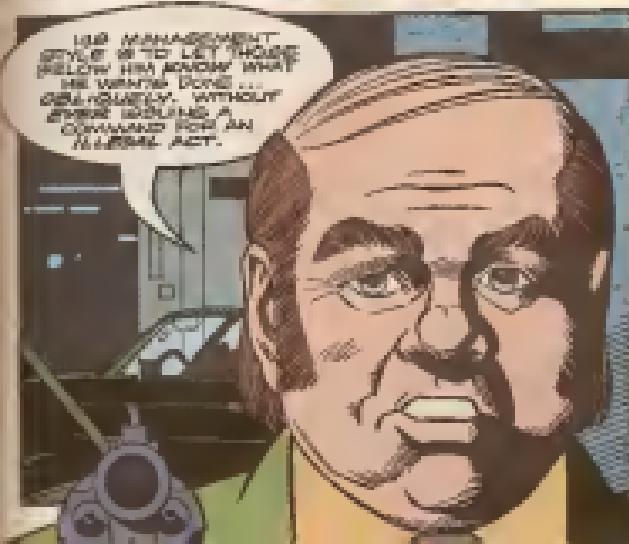
"WELL... BUT  
I'M APPROACHED  
A THREAT. IT'S  
BETTER BACK  
YOU UP."



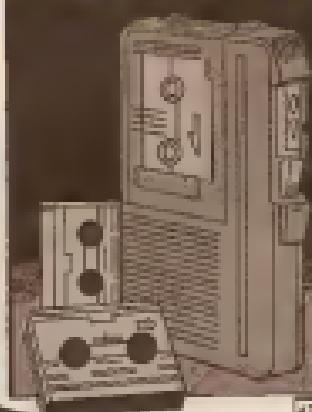




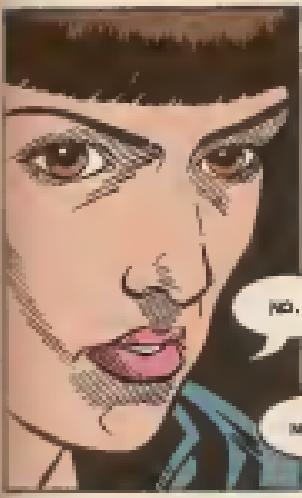
"DONNIE IS A NOVICE WHO NEEDS TO LEARN A LOT -- AND HIS MOTHER IS MUCH MORE MATURE THAN A COLORADO COPO."



"AND HE THOUGHT EVERYTHING TO COME IN HIS LIFE IS A FAIR...







WHAT'S  
HAPPENING...

DON'T  
POSSUMS  
HATCHIN'?

WHERE YOU  
FOLLOWING  
MISTER E?

DO YOU  
JUST...  
TRAP THEM  
TO...





YOU JUST LET HIM KNOWS “I’M SO MANY MILES AWAY YOU DONT BRING ME BACK HOME LIKE A GAGGLE MAMMA!”





# NIGHTKILLS

# MIDNIGHT

**W**E COME TO THE DEAD ZONE, THAT PART OF THE CITY NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT. SURE AS THE POLICE WEREN'T IN THESE PARTS, SIX DESERLOTS HAVE BEEN MURDERED SINCE '87 ROLLED.

**DOCTOR KETCHES WANTS  
HOLIDAY KETCHES WANTS.**

**NO THE COPS DON'T  
HAVE MUCH OF A DASH.**

**DO COMING  
TOMORROW,  
DO COMING  
TOMORROW,  
DO COMING  
TOMORROW,**

CLIFF HOPPER DON'T HAVE  
MANY FRIENDS. FRIENDS DON'T  
MUST MEET. SO SORRY FOR  
FRIENDED FRIENDS. DON'T READ  
FRIENDS. HELL A LITTLE BIT.



I'M GONNA JUMP THE  
FREIGHT. I GIVE WHO DID  
THIS TO YOU, MIKE. I  
PROMISE.



If you don't mind, I'm  
"takin' a fuggin' break  
and don't come  
nowhere.



FRIEND OF MINE WAS  
MURDERED TONIGHT. I  
WANNA SEE HE GETS  
A DECENT BURIAL.

FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T  
HAVE ANY ACCOUNT WITH  
US, WE REQUIRE A  
SUFFICIENT CASH  
DEPOSIT.

HE'S DEAD  
AND ACCORDING  
GIVES A  
DAWN!



CLIFF WALKS THROUGH THE NIGHT, LISTENING  
TO THE VOICES OF THE GHETTO.

HE'S PENDULUM,  
CLIFFIE, BABY.  
HE'S LUCKY,  
THE ADULT OF



AM I TALKIN' TO YOU  
CAN DO BUT BETTER  
THE BOTTLE BACK  
AN BUY YO SELF A  
LITTLE PEACE.

MISBORN  
GODINA  
PEE-YA  
WHAH  
ROBSON

AM HAD  
ASSASSINATE YOUR  
ONLY HOME, CLIFF.



"... AND YOU LIGHT THE FIRST YANKEE CANDLE  
AND THEN -- ACCORDING TO WHAT I HEARD --



"-- THE FOLLOWING MORNING, HE'D  
ARRIVED. THEY SAY HE NEVER SLEPT.  
IF HE COMES TO HELP, HE'LL JUST  
GIVE YOU HIS BUSINESS CARD --

**M**ARY DONE WHAT THE SUPERVISOR  
TOLD HER. BETTER HORN RETURNS TO  
THE CHURCH NOT MIDNIGHT TO SEE IF --











ON MORKIN, THE COMPANY IS IN ONE OF HIS AN INVESTMENT BECAUSE DINO MADE HIS FIRST BILLION BEFORE AGE THIRTY.

DATA THAT EVERYONE...



I'M NOT SURE I CAN DO IT, HEN

ROCK BABY.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A JOHN-DRESSER, JOHN POD

WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR ASSASSINATE, GENTLEMEN, LET'S TALK ABOUT JENNINGS OFFING THE NEXT DERELICT.





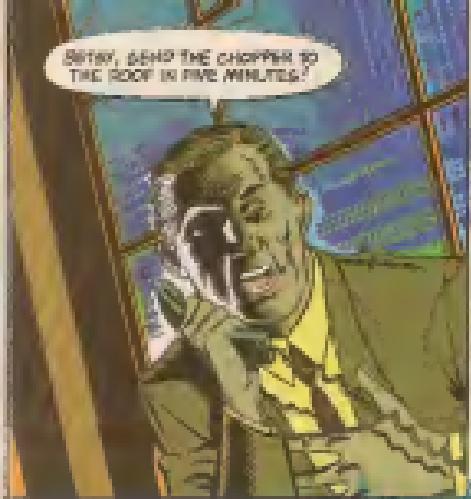
MAN'S BRIGHT, JEWISHNESS. EACH OF US  
FORCED TO ENDURE CARBONISMS AND GO DOWN  
TO HELL. AND ALL A PERSON NEEDS  
IS AN ASSASSINATION AND THE BILLIONAIRE'S  
BACHELOR CLUB. YOU EITHER DO IT OR YOU'RE  
NOT IN THE CLUB.

MURKEL'S FATE IS READY TO BREAK IN HALF

SAY DAY,  
GONE THE  
OTHERS  
IN--

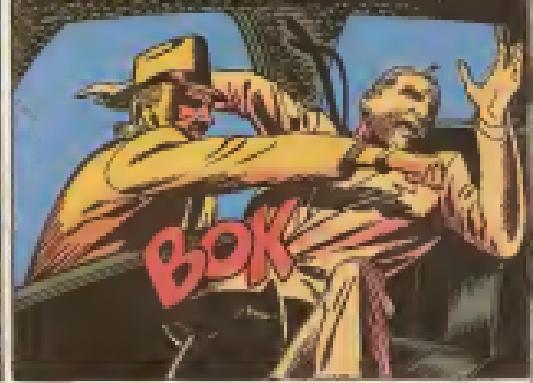


BETTY, SEND THE CHOPPER TO THE ROOF IN FIVE MINUTES!



YOU DID JUST WHAT I TELL YOU. YOU CAME BACK, GRETCH.





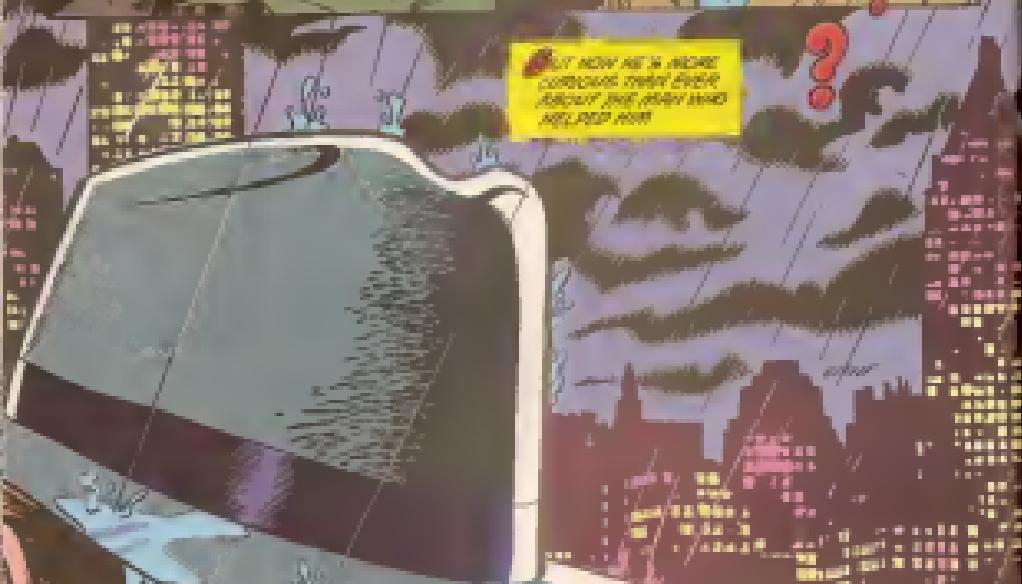
PLEAS IF YOU FOUND  
DON'T MIND, I'LL GET  
ME SOME NEW  
FOOTWEAR



THE DEATH OF CLIFF KETTER'S FRIEND  
HAS BEEN AVENGEDED AS EACH OF  
SOME NEW SHOES ON THE BARROW.

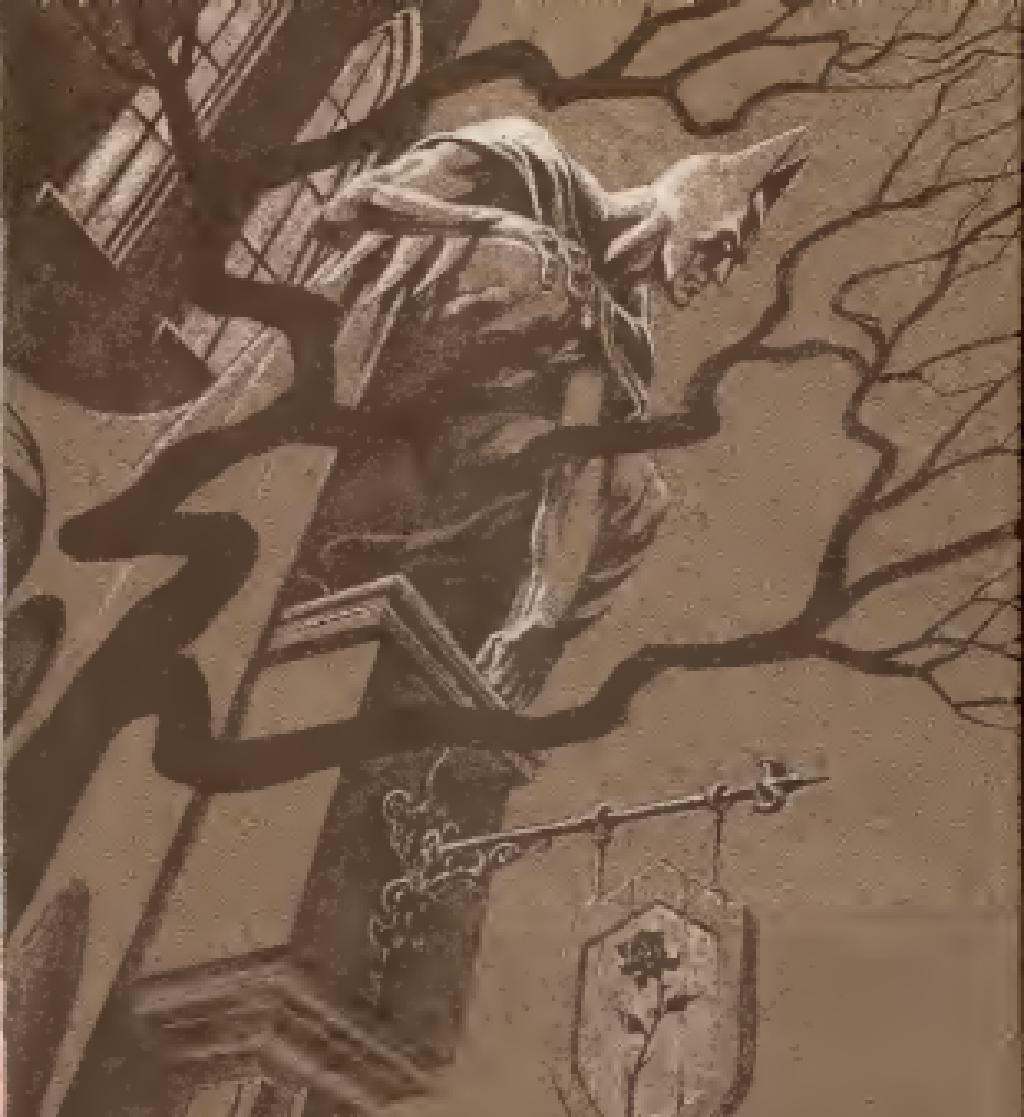


BUT NOW HE'S MORE  
COURAGEOUS THAN EVER  
ABOUT THE MAN WHO  
HELPED HIM



THE LONG, SECRET  
ARMAMENT ONLY  
AS ASSISTANT





# BATMAN THE NAME

If they had attacked him, or if he had been wearing the mask and costume, he would have had no problem dealing with the three hulks who leapt at him and Alfred from the



brushes. As it was, he had already begun the moves that would look like stumbling and would actually be efficient counterattacks. But he was not the target. Alfred was. And the instant it took him to adjust his tactics was an instant he didn't have. He was able to snap the first stalker's humerus with a knife-hand strike and punch the second with a heel to the solar plexus, but the third had a blackjack over his left ear, and then did it a second time, and a third and fourth. Realizing that he could not maintain consciousness—that he had lost—Bruce fainted, his head crashing to the grass, while two engorged and now himself another possibly crippling, blow to the head.

He awoke. His internal clock told him he had been unconscious exactly 53 seconds. He heard an engine. A car was coming behind the house. He ran. But it was too late. He could see shape of the vehicle hitting the iron guards by the east gate, moving along the road which led to the driveway. He glanced at the ground, visible in the glow from one of the spotlights attached to a rear partition. The asphalt, evenly dusted with snow, seemed to offer no chance.

He did a quick personal inventory: nothing broken, nothing loosened and the damage to his skull amounted to no more than the slight of consciousness. His head hurt, but that was no problem, as he was punching the security code into the master diagnostic locking system and laying his handprint onto the sensor plate, he was already focusing onto the pain, getting used to it and enjoying the sense that it would have nothing to cling to.

In the foyer, he checked the dozen concealed safes. No one had actually entered the house. His assailants had simply waited in the bushes; sometimes the crude methods worked best, precisely because they were crude. He went to the

grandfather clock, set the hands at 10:47—the time his parents had been slain, those many years past—pulled the enormous eight chain and stepped back to allow the old clock to swing wide, revealing the hidden doorway and the long slope of stone steps down to the cave.

It was chilly and damp, as always, and that was good. The business he did down here, in the massive cavern, was cold and ugly, and this environment helped him to remain better. He went past the telephone to the communication bank, spoke a telephone number into a microphone and waited while a connection was made.

"A voice from the speaker. "Cavethen residence?"

"Hi, there. It's me—Bruce Wayne. I was at the reception tonight."

"Of course, sir. I remember."

"Is it Jenkins? I'm speaking to?"

"Jacobs, sir."

"Yes. The chauffeur."

"Secretary, sir?"

"Naturally. After all, I didn't call the garage, did I? Well, Jacobs, I wonder if I might speak with your boss. That would be Dr. Anders Cavethen, if you happen to have two bosses."

"I'm afraid Dr. Cavethen has been given his task, Mr. Wayne."

"My, my, he is dedicated. Now, let me see if I remember ... He's going to figure out the code of the Greek Oracle—"

"The Black Rose, sir."

"Yes, yes, of course. He's going to decode this old document and he won't care what he does. That is, Jacobs?"

"Close, sir. He won't leave the study until he has the document deciphered. If he completes the task within 72 hours, a benefactor will donate four million dollars to Dr. Cavethen's favorite charity."

"That's all very well, Jacobs, but it is vitally important that I speak to him."

"Impossible, sir."

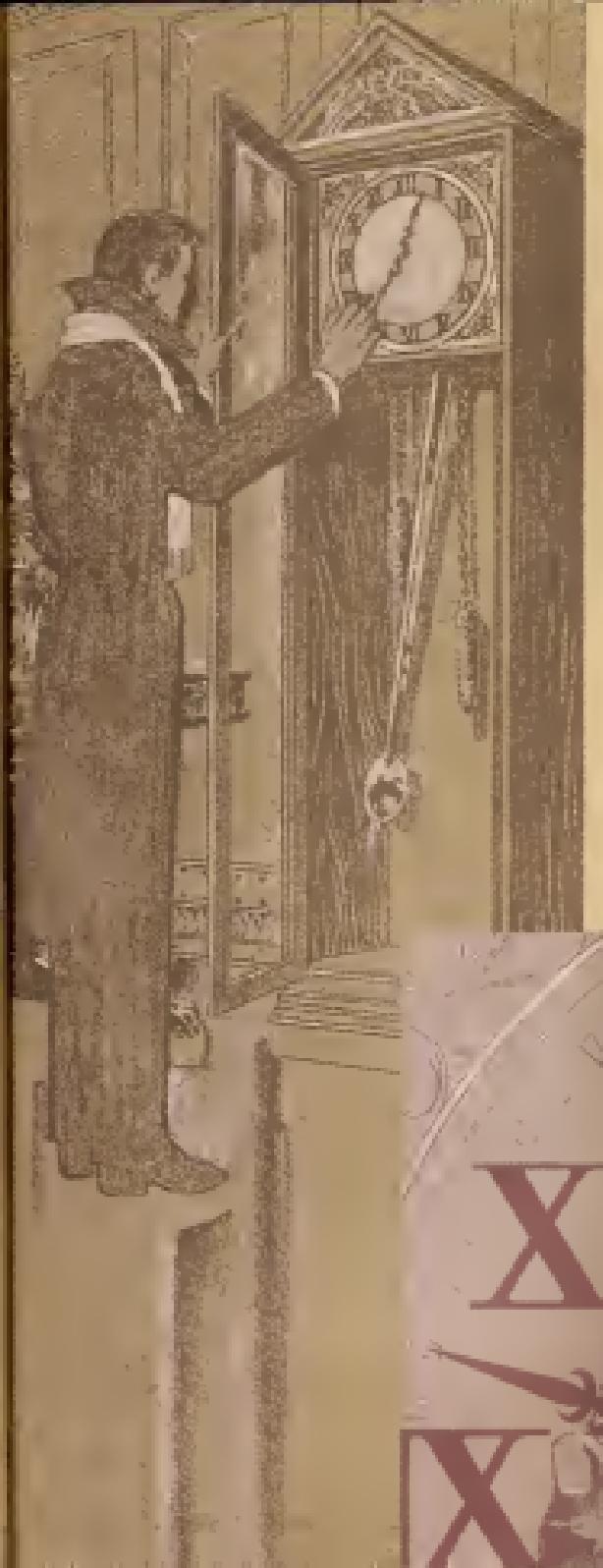
"Isn't you even put a phone call through?"

"The study telephone has been removed."

"Told through the door?"

"Soundproof?"

"I suppose a carrier pigeon is out of the question?"



Jacobs forced a chuckle.

"Tell me, does Dr. Cawthon do this sort of thing often?"

"I wouldn't know, sir. I've been in his employ less than a month. Is that all, Mr. Wayne?"

"Well, it has to be, I suppose."

Wayne snapped his fingers and the coiled man broke. For a moment, he stood staring at the shadowed roof of the cistern and listening to the faint chime of the bell who lived there. It was time to act—and it was time to unmasking, Bruce Wayne.

He shed his mask. He pulled on the rights, the boons, the skin-tight suit. He buckled the belt. He considered the capes hanging in a niche in the cove wall. He didn't know yet what season he would be sailing before morning, and so he could not decide if he should choose the heavy leather cape with the leather pouch for insurance protection or the lighter weight nylon model for maximum maneuverability. When in doubt, opt for stability. He put on the nylon. Finally, and most important of all, the mask. He held it in front of his face for nearly a minute, staring into the empty eyeholes; a mask, he realized—his own, entirely private preparation for the confrontation—

With the mask in place, there was no Bruce Wayne. The handsome, unfocused, funny and even-spirited millionaire suddenly and utterly ceased to be. In his place, there was—an entity for which no name seemed, really. But because it had to be called something, it was called the Batman.

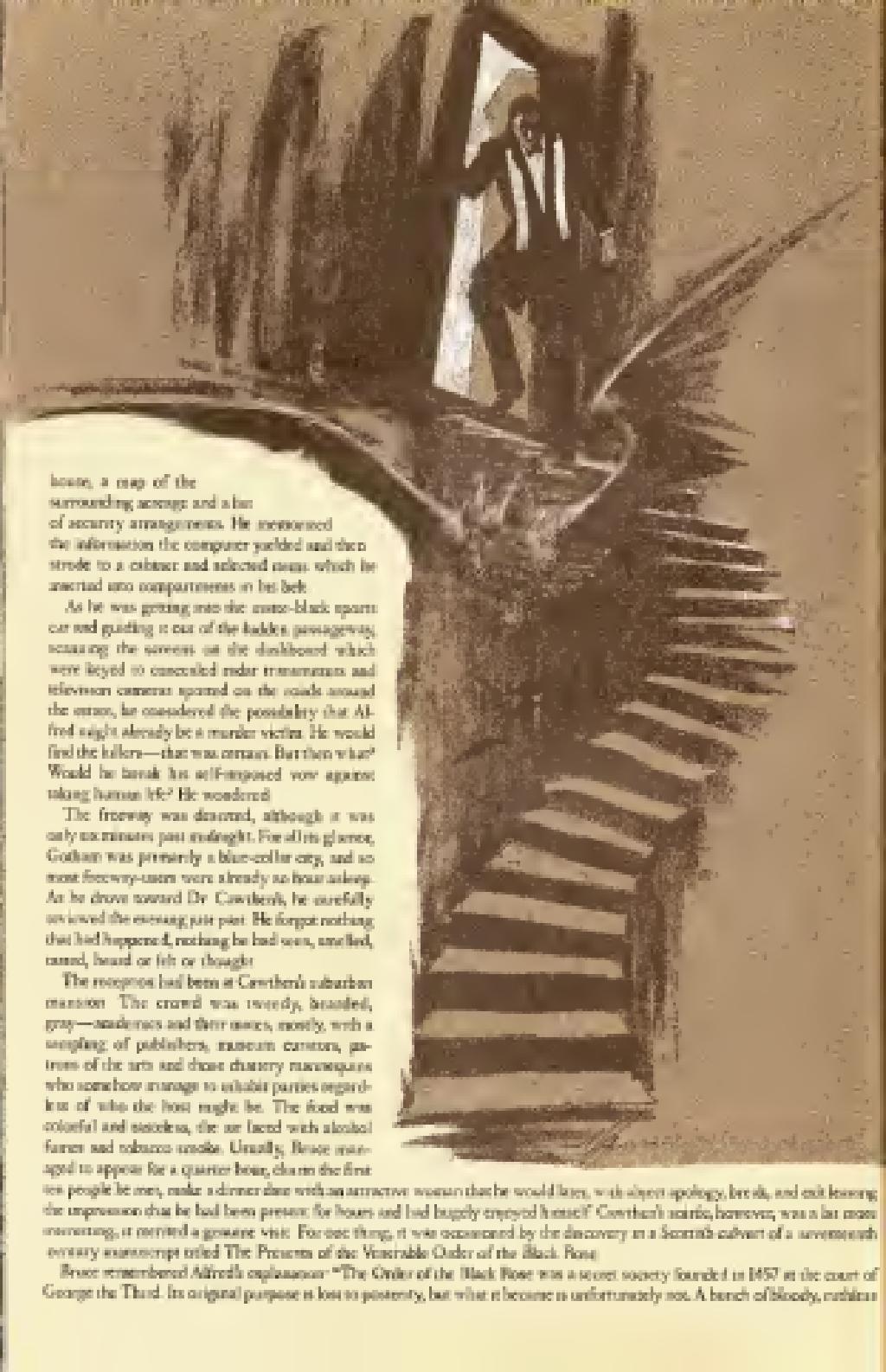
Now it was moving outside the cistern to the bushes where the intruders had waited, playing a general flashlight over the ground, dropping bits of grocery into a plastic evidence bag, reading the signs, the crushed grass, the cracks in the stone, the damp soil. Thirty of them. Weighed less than fifteen minutes. Two were large men, over two hundred pounds, over six feet tall, and the third was smaller—five-foot, one sixty. He knew all this, of course, he had seen the statistics. But he would not assume his knowledge was accurate until it was confirmed.

Back to the cistern, he dropped the plastic bag onto a lab table. He could run tests and analyses, and almost certainly they would provide information, but they would take time and that made them a last resort. He might not have time.

He went to the work station of the computer bank and accessed the Cawthon file. He was particularly interested in the floor plan of Cawthon's

X

X



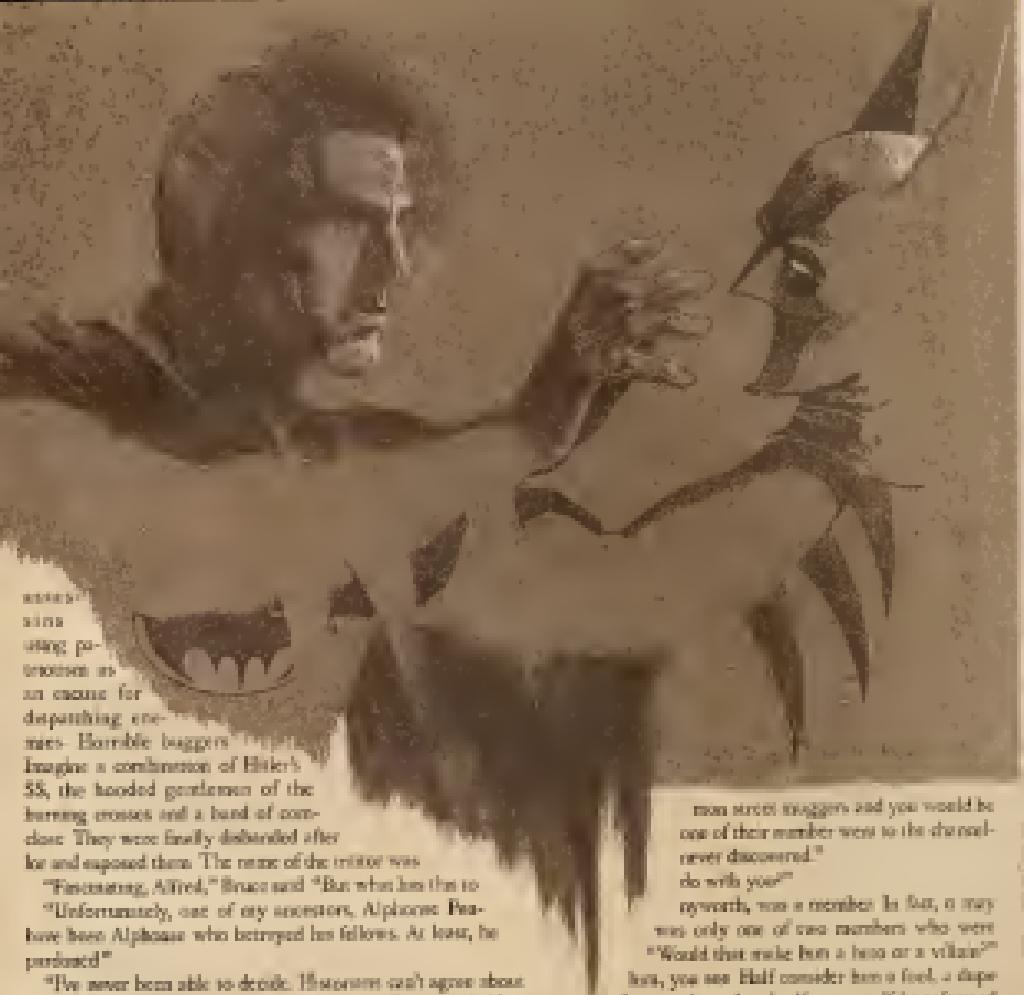
house, a map of the surrounding streets and also of security arrangements. He memorized the information the computer yielded and then strode to a cabinet and selected mace which he inserted into compartments in his belt.

As he was getting into the slate-black sports car and gliding it out of the hidden passageway, scanning the streets on the dashboard which were lined with concealed radar transmitters and television cameras spaced on the roofs around the corner, he considered the possibility that Alfred might already be a murder victim. He would find the killers—that was certain. But then what? Would he break his self-imposed vow against taking human life? He wondered.

The freeway was deserted, although it was only six minutes past midnight. For all its glories, Gotham was primarily a blue-collar city, and so most freeway-users were already in their beds. As he drove toward Dr. Cowherd's, he carefully reviewed the evening just past. He forgot nothing that had happened, nothing he had seen, smelled, heard or felt or thought.

The reception had been at Cowherd's suburban mansion. The crowd was weedy, bearded, gray—academics and their wives, mostly, with a smattering of publishers, museum curators, patrons of the arts and those dusty moneymen who somehow manage to inhabit parties regardless of who the host might be. The food was colorful and tasteless, the air laced with alcohol fumes and tobacco smoke. Usually, Bruce managed to appear for a quarter hour, charm the first ten people he met, make a dinner date with an attractive woman that he would later, with silent apology, break, and exit leaving the impression that he had been present for hours and had hugely enjoyed himself. Cowherd's soirée, however, was a lot more interesting, it merited a genuine visit. For one thing, it was sponsored by the discovery in a Scranton culvert of a seventeenth century manuscript titled *The Precious of the Venerable Order of the Black Rose*.

Bruce remembered Alfred's explanation: "The Order of the Black Rose was a secret society founded in 1457 at the court of George the Third. Its original purpose is lost to posterity, but what it became is unfortunately not. A bunch of bloody, cut-throat



Answer  
Name  
using pa-  
tronage as  
an excuse for  
despising en-  
emies. Horrible buggers.  
Imagine a combination of Hitler's  
SS, the hunched gentlemen of the  
burning crosses and a band of con-  
descend. They were finally disbanded after  
war and exposed them. The name of the traitor was

"Fascinating, Alfred," Bruce said. "But what has this to do with you?"

"Unfortunately, one of my ancestors, Alphonse Peau-  
tou was Alphonse who betrayed his fellows. At least, he  
predicted."

"I've never been able to decide. Historians can't agree about  
who did not realize the Order's real purposes. The other half say  
on the Order, he got an end to the Order wickedness. But he did a  
staying his master's end, turning his loyalty to the gallows. If he  
joined the Order's end. Which is the worse—ignorance or malice? In any event,

"So you're staying to the... what is the purpose of this retegno?"

"I expect we will learn that when we get there, Master Bruce."

They did. Anders Caw then was thin, and frail and pale almost to translucency. His flesh was bloated — " — like a balloon  
as a case. When he spoke, he wheezed, and he paused frequently to gulp air.

"Tonight, I am to begin the greatest and final task of my life," he told the group gathered in the spacious  
atrium.

The master of observation and the ranks of glassware quizzed

"Your explanation," Alfred responded to Bruce.

"As many of you know, the Order of the Black Rose communicated in code. Until the discovery, last month,  
only fragments of that code survived the ravages of time. Now, however, with the Presents to hand, there is a  
sample for me to attempt to decipher it. That I will do. If I succeed, the contents of the Presents will be made fully  
well, the mystery will never be solved and my life is a failure."

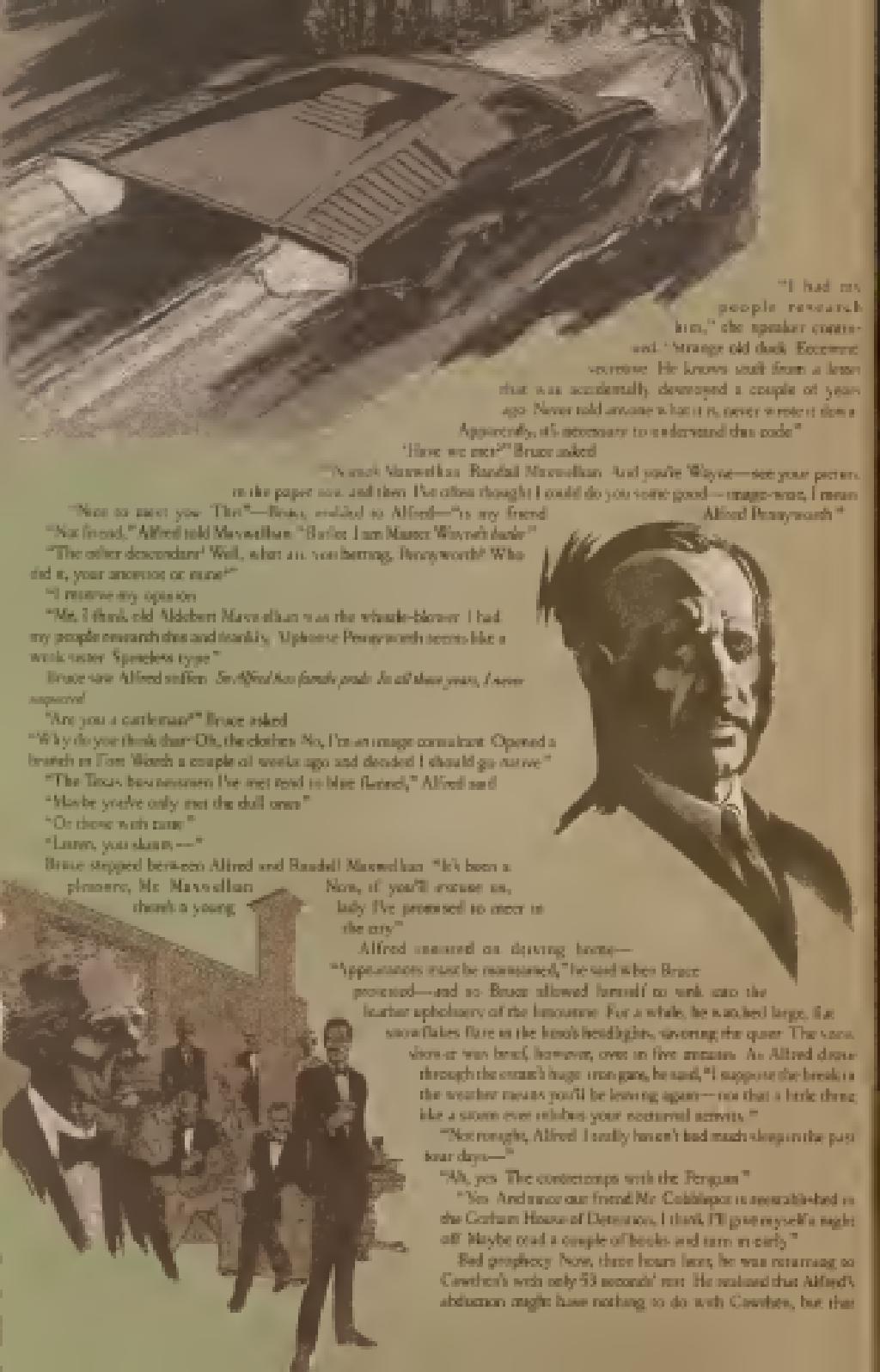
The old man waved his case — probably in frustration, though he looked as though he were conversing with his wife —  
and lunged from the room.

"He's not just blowing smoke," someone in Bruce's class said. "About the mystery never being solved if he makes  
sense."

The speaker was short, stout, mostly bald. He was wearing a bright yellow shirt decorated with silk fringe, a strong  
pressed jeans and unbroken cowboy boots.

men street smugger, and you would be  
one of their number were to be discovered."  
do with you?"

rymouth, was a member. In fact, it may  
well be only one of two members who were  
"Would that make him a hero or a villain?"  
him, you see. Half consider him a fool, a simple  
he was shrewd and self-serving. If he informed  
by connecting the most heinous of crimes, be-  
sides, he was a stupid fool. In any event, it was a foolish suspicion.



"I had no

people research

him," the speaker contin-

ued. "Strange old desk. Received

writing. He knew stuff from a letter

that was accidentally destroyed a couple of years

ago. Never told anyone what it is, never wrote it down.

Apparently, it's necessary to understand this code."

"How we ever?" Bruce asked.

"Frank Maxwellian. Randolph Maxwellian. And you're Wayne—see your picture

on the paper now, and then I've often thought I could do you some good—image-wise, I mean.

"Not so much you. That"—Bruce, miffed to Alfred—"is my friend.

"No friend," Alfred told Maxwellian. "Butler. I am Master Wayne's butler."

"The other descendant? Well, when all's said and done, Pennyworth! Who did it, your ancestor or you?"

"I reserve my opinion."

"Me, I think old Albert Maxwellian was the whistle-blower. I had my people research this and hardly. Uptown Pennyworth seems like a weak water Spangles type."

Bruce saw Alfred smirking. *So Alfred has family pride. In all those years, I never suspected.*

"Are you a cartelman?" Bruce asked.

"Why do you think that? Oh, the clothes. No, I'm an image consultant. Opened a branch in Fort Worth a couple of weeks ago and decided I should go native."

"The Texas businessmen I've met tend to like flannel," Alfred said.

"Maybe you've only met the dull ones."

"Or choose with care."

"Later, you damn—"

Bruce stepped between Alfred and Randolph Maxwellian. "It's been a pleasure, Mr. Maxwellian. Thank a young

man, if you'll excuse me, lady I've promised to meet in the city."

Alfred snatched up driving home—

"Appropriations must be maintained," he said when Bruce proceeded—and so Bruce allowed himself to walk onto the leather upholstery of the limousine. For a while, he watched large, flat snowflakes flare in the head headlights, savoring the quiet. The van, slow-as-worm, however, over its five minutes. As Alfred drove through the smooth huge iron gate, he said, "I suppose the weather means you'll be leaving again—not that a little thing like a storm ever inhibits your nocturnal activity."

"Not tonight, Alfred. I really haven't had much sleep in the past few days."

"Ah, yes. The confrontations with the Penguin."

"Yes. And since our friend Mr. Cobblepot is re-established in the Gorham House of Detention, I think I'll give myself a night off. Maybe read a couple of books and turn in early."

Bad prophecy. Now, three hours later, he was returning to Cowlane's web only 53 seconds' rest. He realized that Alfred's abduction might have nothing to do with Cowlane, but that



out audibly and, lacking anywhere else to begin, he would question the old scholar. He parked the car in the shadows alongside the high stone wall that surrounded Cawther's estate, set its alarms, and, after a moment's concentration, bounded from the top of the car to the top of the wall and over. He landed lightly, his fingers already catching a thin across-camera from his belt. The two German shepherds headed around the corner of the house. When they were about ten feet away, the Batman pressed the top of the screen and the dogs stopped, relaxed, whimpers and collapsed onto the grass. They would be unconscious for approximately two hours.

The Batman glided to the house and looked up at a single rectangle of light high in a corner, five stories above the ground. If he tried to reach it from outside, he would have to deal with a battery of burglar alarms, a bather, a chauffeur, a secretary and a hired security guard. This he could do with no assassination effort, but it would take time and that was exactly what he might not have.

He pulled off a glove and felt the texture of the wall with his bare fingers. No problem. He removed his other glove, folded it with an ease and tucked both under his belt. Then he reached up, hooked his fingers into a space between the stones, and began climbing.

Exactly four minutes later, he was perched on a sill peering through a window into Aaron Cawther's study. Light came from a single circular fluorescent bulb in a reflector above a desk in the center of the room. The old man was hunched over a computer keyboard, his gaze darting from a sheet of parchment on the desk to the computer screen. As the Batman watched, he pressed a key and peered anxiety at the screen for a moment before returning his attention to the parchment.

The window opened easily and the Batman slipped into the room. Cawther's head jerked around and he gasped.

"Please don't be alarmed, Doctor," the Batman said pleasantly. "I won't keep

you long."

"Who are you?" the old man gasped.

"I'm afraid not."

"Call me the Batman. I'd like to ask you a question, if I may."

"Someone is pay-

"I must stop you, can I?"

"Not paying me."

"Then do it quickly and get out."

"Society—"

ing you a large sum to decode the *Protocol*—"

"Who is offering the money?"

I'll probably be dead before the check gets written. Paying the Gotham Bedazzlers.

"None of your business."

"You're right."

The Batman knelt by an electrical outlet and snipped a length of wire that ran from it to the computer. He looked up at Cawther and smiled. "I understand that when the power to a computer is interrupted, whatever is in the machine is lost. Hours of labor sometimes. Is that correct, Doctor?"

"You wouldn't dare!"

The Batman tugged at the wire. "I will do anything I want. Absolutely anything."

"No, no," Cawther gasped, and coughed for almost a minute. When he had regained his breath, he said, "It's Halibut. Across Halibut."

"Sir Aaron Halibut? The British industrialist?"

"Yes, yes. Now I've given you the name. Get out!"

"In a moment. Why is this translation so important to him?"

"Because the name of the man who betrayed the Order of the Black Rose is in it."

"And do you have any idea what that name might be?"

"One of two. either Alphonse Pennyworth or Alibert Maxwellus."

"Why does Halibut care about the name?"

"How the devil should I know?"

"Ghosts, or—" The Batman curled the wire around his forefinger.

"The Royal Court sent one of Halibut's assassins to the gallows at the Tower of London. As the noose was being put around his neck, he made his peace in our vengeance. Such a succumbing guarantee of male Halibut's have roses edifice you. I suppose that includes Aaron Halibut."

"So he wants to make good on a promise that's hundreds of years old?"

"I suppose."

The Batman let the wire drop to the floor and stood. "Doctor, a man's life may be in danger. You've got to today completing your confidence at least a day or two



*"I shouldn't need more than that—less, in fact—"*

"*"Yes!"*" Cawthen shouted, the hoarse voice suddenly charged with passion. "I am dying. My

rights, I should already be dead! At any second I may be. I am only able to function because of painkillers.

Worms glimmered in his eyes. "And, you see, I have spent my life and most of my adolescence studying the Order of the Black Rose. I have allowed it to be the center of my existence. I have never had a wife, children, even any close friends. Oh, I was foolish, I can see that now. But it is too late to change and I never know. I must know who the master was. Can you understand? Can you possibly comprehend what it is to be in the grasp of an all-consuming obsession?"

The Batman put his hand on the old man's shoulder and said, "Yes." Then he stepped back and said, "Lie. Give Halbert a hard name."

"He would not be looked. He is as familiar with the Order as I am."

"Fresh the decoding but tell Halbert you haven't."

"*"This!"*"—Cawthen touched the computer—"makes that impossible. It is connected by telephone to a duplicate machine in Halbert's possession. He is able to follow my labors as I perform them."

The Batman pondered. He could put Cawthen to sleep easily enough, but if the scholar was as ill as he claimed—and looking at him, the Batman did not doubt it—even minor violence might be too much. He could destroy the computer. But how would he prove entry? It was a chance he dare not take.

He unwrapped a thin polymer line from around his wrist, tied one end to a radiator, and sprang to the window sill.

"I can't wish you good luck, Doctor. But I expect that."

He stepped out of the window.

Back in the car, he tapped a number into a cellular telephone and accessed the vast data bank in the batcave. A screen on the dashboard brightened and a small keyboard slid from under it. He typed. Letters began popping onto the screen. Within five minutes he knew that Arson Halbert had been once committed to a mental hospital outside London and that there was a history of violent psychosis in his family (Did that mean Halbert was capable of murder?) The Batman tapped another telephone number and listened to a buzzing. Then "Hello?"

"Commissioner, it's me."

"As two in the morning, who else would it be?"

"I need information."

"Go on."

"A man named Maxwellton may have been kidnapped last night."

"He was. The call came an hour ago. Guy was grabbed outside his apartment building at about midnight. Wimow was walking his dog, and the kidnappers pulled up in a dark blue Chevy sedan a minute or two before Maxwellton arrived. A doorman tried to intervene, got shot to death for his trouble."

*"That covers my question, the Batman told himself. The kidnappers will be nearby."*

"dog-walker said there were three attackers," Commissioner James Gordon was saying. "Get away in a fast blue sedan, probably rented. We're checking. You know anything about this?"

"You might find out where Arson Halbert is. I'm guessing he's somewhere near Gotham."

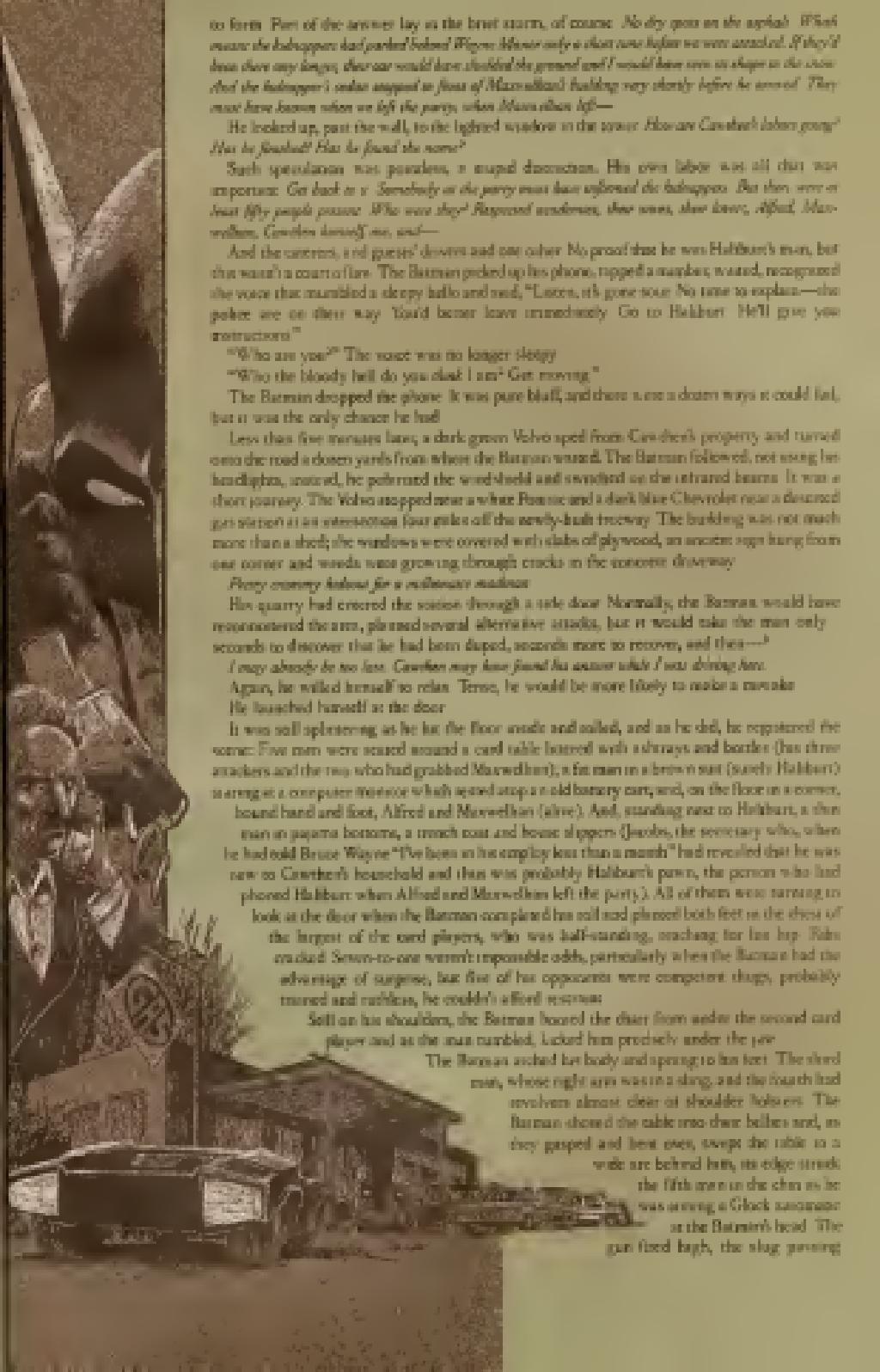
"Okay, I'll get someone on it. But why?"

"I have reason to believe Halbert is behind the darkness."

"Loosen, I've got to leave—"

The Batman broke the connection. He put his forearms on the steering wheel, rested his head on them, straightened and began breathing deeply. Slowly, systematically, he began tensing and releasing his muscles. When his body was fully relaxed, his mind had calmed.

Then he did what only he knew he did best—he thought. Let his memory range over the past twelve hours, reviewed events, considered possible meetings, allowed connections



to form. Part of the answer lay in the brief alarm, of course. No dry grass or the asphalt. What made the kidnappers had parked behind Wayne Manor only a short time before we were attacked. If they'd been there any longer, darkness would have shielded the ground and I would have seen no shapes in the snow. And the kidnapper's orders required in front of Maxwellton building very shortly before the start. They must have known when we left the party when *Alfred* then left.

He looked up, past the wall, to the litigated window in the tower. *How are Cavendish taken going? Has he finished? Has he found the name?*

Such speculations were pointless, a stupid distraction. His own life was all that was important. *Go back to it. Somebody in the party must have informed the kidnappers. But there were at least fifty people present. Who were they?* Resigned audience, their wives, their love, Alfred, Maxwellton. *Cavendish himself me, and—*

And the cameras, *and guests' drivers and one other*. No proof that he was Haldiburn man, but that wasn't a court of law. The Batman picked up his phone, ripped a number, waited, recognized the voice that mumbled a sleepy hello and said, "Listen, it's gone sour. No time to explain—the police are on their way. You'd better leave immediately. Go to Haldiburn. I'll give you instructions."

"Who are you?" The voice was no longer sleepy.

"Who the bloody hell do you think I am? Get moving."

The Batman dropped the phone. It was pure bluff, and there were a dozen ways it could fail, but it was the only chance he had.

Less than five minutes later, a dark green Volvo sped from Cavendish property and turned onto the road a dozen yards from where the Batman waited. The Batman followed, not using his headlights, instead, he gathered the wind-sheild and switched on the infrared beams. It was a short journey. The Volvo stopped near a white Pontiac and a dark blue Chevrolet near a deserted gas station at an intersection four miles off the newly-built freeway. The building was not much more than a shell; the windows were covered with slabs of plywood, an ancient sign hanging from one corner and weeds were growing through cracks in the concrete driveway.

*Pretty economy building for a millionaire mansion*

His quarry had entered the station through a side door. Normally, the Batman would have recommended the fire, planned several alternative attacks, but it would take the man only seconds to discover that he had been duped, seconds more to recover, and then—

*I may already be too late. Cavendish may have found his answer while I was driving here.*

Again, he willed himself to relax. Tense, he would be more likely to make a mistake.

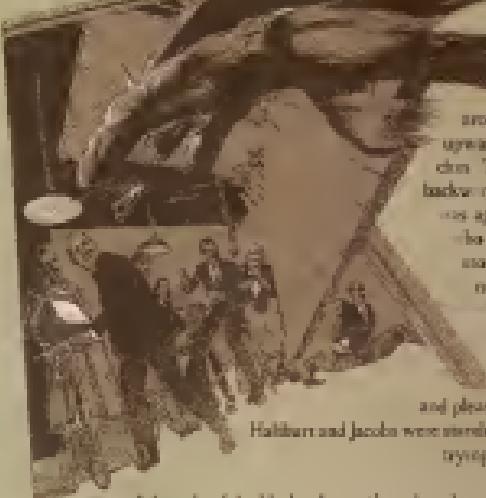
He reached himself at the door.

It was still splintering, as he hit the floor inside and sailed, and as he did, he registered the scene: Five men were seated around a card table buried with ashtrays and bottle (the three attackers and the two who had grabbed Maxwellton); a fat man in a brown suit (surely Haldiburn) sitting at a computer monitor which issued sharp oddballary carts, and, on the floor in a corner, bound hand and foot, Alfred and Maxwellton (alive). And, standing next to Haldiburn, a thin man in pajama bottoms, a trench coat and house slippers (Jacobs, the secretary who, when he had told Bruce Wayne "I've been in his employ less than a month" had revealed that he was new to Cavendish household and thus was probably Haldiburn pawn, the person who had phoned Haldiburn when Alfred and Maxwellton left the party). All of them were turning to look at the door when the Batman completed his roll and placed both feet in the shoes of the largest of the card players, who was half-standing, reaching for his hip. Fists cracked Seven-to-one weren't impossible odds, particularly when the Batman had the advantage of surprise, but five of his opponents were competent thugs, probably trained and ruthless; he couldn't afford a respite.

Still on his shoulders, the Batman hoisted the chair from under the second card player and as the man numbled, kicked him precisely under the jaw.

The Batman arched his body and sprung to his feet. The third man, whose right arm was in a sling, and the fourth had revolver almost clear of shoulder holsters. The Batman shoved the table into their bellies and, as they gaped and bent over, except the table in a wide arc behind him, his edge struck the fifth man in the chin as he was aiming a Glock magazine

at the Batman's head. The gun fired back, the slug passing



well over as targets, and the Batman let the momentum of the table spin him

around, his feet moving out and slightly upward to meet the power of the gunwreck club. The man's head snapped and he fell backward. Before he hit the floor, the Batman was again facing the third and fourth men, who were still grasping and clutching their stomachs. The Batman recognized the center of the pair as the blackpak artist who had pounded his skull. It was a moment he occasionally experienced, a moment when adrenaline surged and the need for revenge was hot and pleasurable. Those of them were down trying to comprehend what was happening.

Now he could afford respite.

He reached out.  
The arms sagged

grasped the side of the blackpak artist's neck and gently prodded. A painless pido technique and crumpled.

The Batman could never allow himself to experience any satisfaction whatever from violence—not without the terrible risk of becoming what he despised.

"I give up." That was from the man with the broken arm, still clutching his wrist, backing away from the Batman.

"Very well." The Batman produced handcuffs from under his cape and tossed them to the kidnapper. "Put those on and we're for the police."

The Batman did not wait to see if he was obeyed.

He turned. Jacobs was staring at him, Haldibut at the monitor.

"He's doing it," Haldibut whispered. "He's broken the code and left getting the name."

Haldibut would be arrested, would perhaps be held by the authorities that he was rich, and the wealthy had resources, but would be set, hands paid, easily compute attorney-client. Even if he were imprisoned, he could maximize his vindictiveness.

On the screen, the letters were appearing slowly, as though the persons typing them were taking enormous care.

#### TRAITOR'S NAME IS AL

The Batman put the sole of his boot against the battery case and straightened his leg. The case bumped a few feet across the floor, hit a crack in the concrete and ripped—

"Hey!" Haldibut shrieked, raising his hands from the chair.

The Batman showed him back.

And the monitor exploded and hit the floor and exploded. The lights flickered. Haldibut stared at the laser that had been the computer.

"I'll get the name—all well," he mumbled.

"Perhaps," the Batman replied.

He looked at the pretenses and a few seconds later they were free.

"Linen, falls, I've got to thank you," Mayne said, rubbing his wrists.

"Don't bother," the Batman said.

He stepped to the door and faded into the darkness.

—according to the morning newscast, poor old Cawthon was found sprawled on the floor by his computer. Alfred was lying as he stirred waffles batter the next day. "They say the machine was shut off."

"Uh huh," Bruce said over the rim of his orange juice glass.

"I wonder how he felt, those last few seconds?"

"I suspect he died happy—at least, he had a smile on his face."

"Huh? Bruce, how could you possibly...oh, certainly. You were there?"

"Someone had to turn off Cawthon's computer."

"Then you saw the scene?"

Bruce was silent.

"But you won't tell me what it was?"

"Only if you really want me to. Do you?"

"Some day, perhaps. When I have finally decided."

"Decided what, Alfred?"

"Which is worse, ignorance or reality?"



# Ms. TREE

On the road back to our roots, somebody took a left turn.

Back in the very early 1930s, there were no comic collector shops. In fact, there were no comic books per se — a few reprint collections of popular newspaper strips, but they weren't in my set of magazine form, and they weren't published periodically.

However, there were the large character pulp — *The Shadow*, *Dave Savage*, *The Spider* — the last goes on and on. These mysterious companies' long print run (with illustrations) featuring the eponymous characters and his inevitable cohorts. Each issue was presented out by a couple of back-up stories that maintained the lead feature's tone.

The pulps were these massive volumes, made thick not really by the page count but by the pulpy paper they used. To purchase *Bill Crosby*, you could actually see the sheath of wood framing in the paper.

Besides their enormous influence on pop culture, they really didn't last all that long. However, as a niche has been pointed out — most eloquently by *The Spectre* in the first volume of *His History of Comics* — there is almost connection between the hero pulps and comics. They were so influential that, when the comic publishers did started up in the mid-1930s (many of whom were printing pulps as well), we can see an influence very similar to happen, they took those lead from the hero pulps. Quite frankly, the hero pulps gave birth to the hero comics.

In the ensuing five decades, the hero pulps evolved into the hero periodicals (the likes of *Doc Savage*, *The Spider*, and *Operator 3* gave way to the likes of *Mike Hammer*, *James Bond*, and *Bob Dylan*), and the anthology would give way to the comic book comic.

What you're holding is something old & return to our roots — a graphic comic featuring an extremely hard boiled hero who dominates the page count, backed by two short stories.

Of course, we're keeping the comic format. Mostly.

MS. TREE QUARTERLY is indeed a comic book, but one that takes much of its influence from the old heroic character pulps.

successful ongoing feature to be produced in the 1930s — DC and Marvel included — to make it in the 1950s. She got her start to the old Eclipse Monthly, and wrote on to star in 50 issues of her own comic book.

The creation of Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty, Ms. Tree clearly wears her influences on her sleeve: the Burroughesque private eyes, with a touch of Mickey Spillane and a dash of Raymond. Well, maybe more than just a dash and a dash. Undeniably, undeniably and passionately suspending, Ms. Tree has been the most enduring leading private detective in the history of comic books. Only *DETECTIVE COMICS* Alan Bradley — a backlog feature — remained longer, and Ms. Tree's breaking down her neck.

At the time of her creation, Beatty was well known for his work in a newspaper and columnist for the *Comics Buyer's Guide*. And by the point, Collins had already a dozen or so reprints and thrillers under his belt — not to mention several years of writing Dick Tracy for the newspaper. Since creating this feature, Collins and Beatty managed to find time to create *WILD DICK* for DC, Max has written about a half dozen more novels, including the award-winning *Nine Hell* series. (I'm sorry, we'll be plugging Max's upcoming novels as they come on — right now, his adaptation of the Dick Tracy comic strip is about to hit the stores, and his fourth Max Heller novel, *Nine Hells*, will be out as paperback this coming winter; a new Heller novel has been completed and will be appearing as hardcover at about the same time.)

I don't want to give Ms. Tree short shrift, but her nearly ten years of publication speaks for itself. Instead, I want to spend a bit of our precious space talking about our other two features.

Midnight was created by Jack Cole (of *Funny Man Show*) for the old Quality line of comics, under whose colors all the publisher and editor, Lou Fine at the original *Midnight* was based in-universe Will Eisner's *The Spirit* — a classic over there. Quality was reissuing *The Spirit*, and they were resurrecting *The Spirit* right before it was undermined (in being pulled) by Eisner's being drafted into that little booklet we call *World War II*. Cole was for his comics to do an imitation of anything, and *Midnight* was open to imitating *Spirer*, even if the hero did look like *The Spirit*.

In recreating *Midnight*, we wanted to take the character as he was from *The Spirit* as

## DC COMICS INFO.

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possible while preserving the main visual, highly pulp-oriented aspects of the feature. Max Collins recommended for *Midnight*, the award-winning mystery and western novelist Ed Gorman — Ed's also the editor of *Mystery Zone* magazine and of my absolute all-time favorite mystery anthologies, *The Black Lizard Anthologies of Crime Fiction*. Most recently, Ed teamed up with Bob Randal to edit *Under the Gun*, another crime/mystery anthology (all three books, by the way, include Max Collins stories).

If all you've seen from what Gorman writes in his work on *POWER OF THE ATOM* or the brand-new, just-released *THE WICKEDST* recently (for which he also has a new book), then you probably expect his more pulp-oriented work by *Midnight*. Not to worry, a quick look at this story and you'll see why he was my first and only choice to do *Midnight*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our *Illustrated Story* segment is an attempt to look at the artistry in stories where MS. TREE QUARTERLY takes its influences from the old heroic character pulps. It was only fair to reward our comic book with an illustrated pulp-style entry, featuring several classic comic characters in prose form.

We're starting off with *Batman*, written by Deary O'Neill and illustrated by Mike Grell, for the following reasons: 1) Deary's quite the prose writer, isn't it nice to see him translate that part of his brain over again; 2) Mike's quite the *Illustrator*, something about which many critics don't care to answer, and 3) boy, this is the first issue of an unillustrated female hero comic book, and this story's *presenting Batman*, and we ain't stupid. We're going to give *MS. TREE* every chance we can.

Upcoming stories will be featuring *The Bachelor*, the *Cool Detective*, *Inspector Henderson*, *Crime*, in the *20th Century*, and *Wild Dog*. Our feature comic will include *Mike Hammer* and *Eve Aulin*, *Perry Como* and *William Shirer*, *Larry Gelbart* and *Larry Gelbart*, *John Sprague* and *John Sprague*, and *Max Collins* and *Deary O'Neill*. Who and yeah, so why isn't *Tony Stark* slaying *Wild Dog*? Hey, do you have any idea how one kidnaps a person to prevent said gal all day? Wild, most stories take slightly longer than three months... which poses a problem if you're doing a book called *MS. TREE QUARTERLY*!

The talented Dean Morris — of *Blister II* and *THE PRISONER* fame — is our designer on the cover, handling the look of

\* \* \* \* \*

Our last feature, Ms. Tree, is hardly a new-born babe. Indeed, she was the first

the words and pictures. As an editor's dream, or, perhaps more accurately, an editor's disease and possibly an editor's nightmare, *Answers*, *Dark* makes a valuable and fine world of critical insight questionable to our series of Illustrated Stories.

\* \* \* \* \*

Most comic books need a cover (not all—check out *World War II Tales*), and in keeping with our goals addressed, we've decided to do with cover paintings from our *TITLE QUARTERLY*. Mike Gold looks off our backs, and Mike will be back before too long. Debra Corman (who's also done some paintings on *TITLE QUARTERLY*) and Scott Hampton are next in line.

\* \* \* \* \*

Overall, we're real proud of *MS. TITLES QUARTERLY*. It's quite a challenge, and the way everybody's putting together to make this concept work is quite a sight to behold. My deepest thanks to all involved.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the most popular features on the previous issues of *MS.* has been the concluding and provocative letter column, written by Mike Collins and partly related *Swank*. The editor knows a good thing when he sees it, and the oft-demonstrated Mr. Collins will be assuming the *Swank*

column in our new issue. Therefore, kindly send your letters of comment to:

Swank / Ms. Title Quarterly  
c/o EC Comics Inc.  
460 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

After I read 'em, I'll be mailing them off to Mike. Let me encourage you to comment on both *Midnight* and our *Illustrated Story* features as well; we need all the feedback we can get.

\* \* \* \* \*

A very deep and personal thank you to Michael Spillane for selflessly, freely and quickly giving us the big *TITLE* endorsement quote we've been proudly using in our promotional work. Michael's latest book—indeed, his first *Mike Hammer* novel in two decades—is called *The Killing Man*, and it's like the man never stopped writing the things. If you like old *TITLE* and you've never read a *Mike Hammer* novel, you've truly been missing something. Check it out.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the regular "bananas" in each issue of the old *MS.* was our sidebar ad from my old friends, Robert and Phyllis Weinberg. These folks have been busy writing mystery, pulp, fantasy, and science fiction stuff for years—they're also co-authors of the

annual Chicago Classics comic art convention, which happens to be very close now.

Among the millions of items they keep in stock just happens to be the complete works of Max Collins — at least, the stuff that's in print. This includes his monthly prose series *Mike Hammer*, *Midnight*, *Dark Theory*, and the king of the *Untold Tales*, the *Mike Hammer* series. The Weinbergs also keep Max's critical and reading works in stock, and they stock Ed Gorman's *Black Library* anthologies, to boot. They probably have about half of *Catching a Nodding Cat*; if you're having a hard time finding any *Untold Tales* or *Hammer* titles, try dropping them a letter at 13140 Oxford Drive, Oak Forest Illinois 60452, or call them 708 827 3360.

\* \* \* \* \*

In *Horror* newsletter, Mr. Tore takes off again in a bizarre cult for typical bad book reviews, but predictably, she gets a lot from those she purports to. Which doesn't do enough to legitimate her expanded life spans, believe me. Collins and Weinry at the doctor's office, much?

Plus... the return of *Midnight*, by Gorman and Niles (the artist, not the paperback kind), and our second *Illustrated Story*. And a present never from Debra Corman.

Please write comments

— Mike Gold

